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*LES PARAPLUIES*  
*By Pierre Auguste Renoir*

*(THE UMBRELLAS)*



*MADAM CHARPENTIER AND HER CHILDREN*  
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir

—Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art

## The Master Impressionists

[Chapter IV]

By CHARLES LOUIS BORGMEYER

IN 1867 Manet used a sentence in the catalogue of an exhibition that he held of his works, that became famous as an expression of the principles of the men, who met regularly at the *Café Guerbois* from 1862 to 1870. It was: "The artist does not say today: 'Come and see faultless works;' but 'Come and see sincere works.'" This really was the way they felt.

They were sincere in their efforts to

break from the conventional in painting. They forgot that all art must work in some convention, for perfect imitation of nature is impossible. Even when they threw aside the imaginary world and tried to reproduce pure phenomena in their copies of nature: made on the spot, they failed, for the result was still an imitation with the splendors of the natural colors of day and sunlight left out. They made experiment after experiment, not getting the lights any more posi-



*LA TASSE DE THÉ*  
*By Pierre Auguste Renoir*

*(THE CUP OF TEA)*





*LA FEMME À LA ROSE*  
By Pierre Auguste Renoir

—Courtesy Dublin Municipal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dublin, Ireland  
(WOMAN WITH THE ROSE)



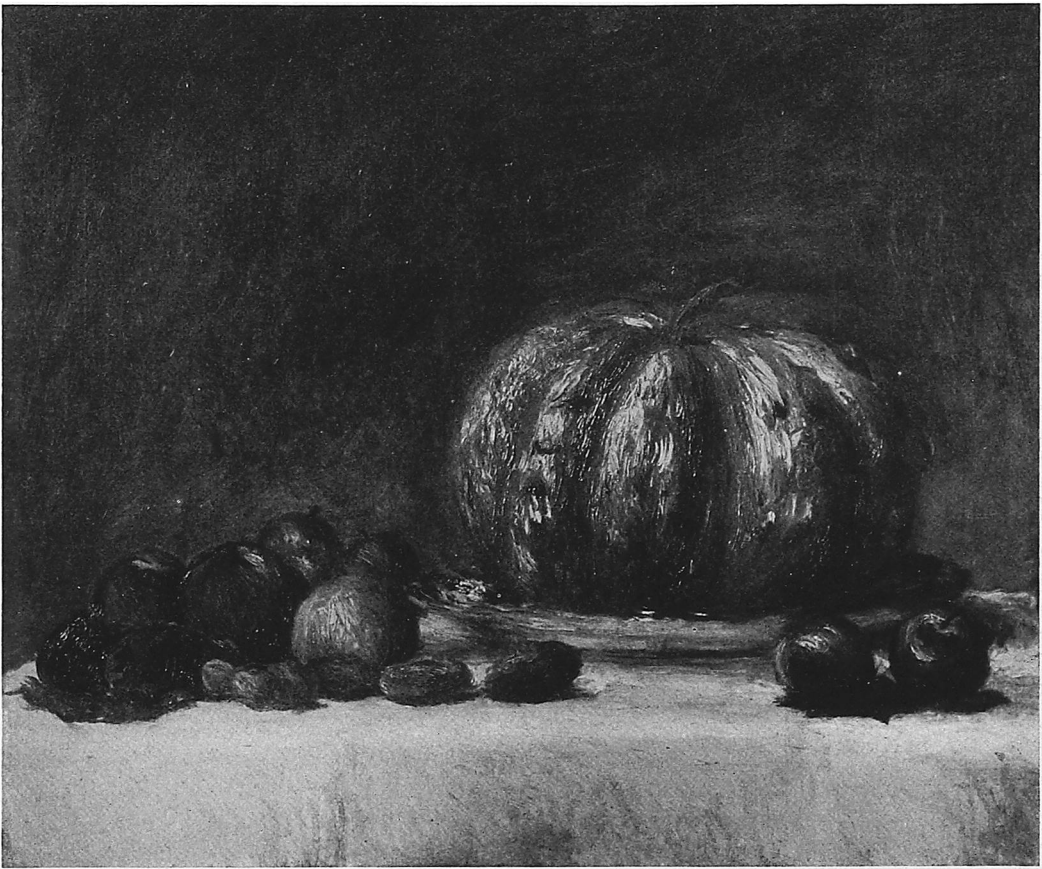
*JOUEUSE DE GUITARE*  
By Pierre Auguste Renoir

(THE GUITAR PLAYER)



*MÈRE ET ENFANT*  
By Pierre Auguste Renoir

(MOTHER AND CHILD)



*NATURE MORTE*  
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir

(STILL LIFE)

tively than did the men of the past, with their falsified shadows; they had raised the key but the sky was too high for their palette to reach. The dazzling sunlight was deadened by the mixture of tones on their palette.

They had reached the stage in their researches where they felt their masters were false in their treatment of light, but were themselves unable to paint bright, glorious, luminous sunlight. They had not discovered the secret they were after, but they were so far along the way that they were very quick to appropriate and carry to its legitimate conclusion a hint they soon had given them by one of Turner's pictures.

The war of 1870 scattered the little

group. Manet, who lived in Paris, became an officer in the National Guard and was appointed Captain to Meissonier's staff. He saw a good deal of fighting with the Prussians and of his own people later in the Commune. Zola went to Bordeaux. Renoir was *moblot*. Pissarro and Daubigny went to London, where Claude Monet followed them after first visiting Amsterdam.

The story goes that Claude Monet worked in the parks and nearly starved, as did Pissarro; that he sent a picture to the Royal Academy which was refused; that Daubigny became interested in him to such an extent that he told Durand-Ruel that if he would buy some of Claude Monet's pictures, he, Daubigny, would pay for them



with his own work. Durand-Ruel agreed to see the young man, whereupon Claude Monet appeared with six or seven canvases under his arm. Durand-Ruel took two or three and Claude Monet introduced him to Pissarro hoping to pass the "good thing" along. All these days he and Pissarro were haunting the London galleries, where they fell under the spell of Turner. A picture of snow by Turner particularly struck them. He had employed flecks of pure bright paint, side by side, to create masses of tone, and in doing this intense luminosity and vibrancy of color was created. They copied him; they looked for other examples of paint used in this way and found them in some of Constable, Watts and Cox's pictures, who to suggest sunlight, fresh air and movement, had invented a formula of their own, symbolizing the vibration of light and the movement of clouds, grass and trees, a formula of broken touches in place of the broad level washes beloved by their predecessors.

Claude Monet and Pissarro saw at once that the vibration of these scattered touches of pigment was in some degree analogous to the vibration of the luminous waves of light and air that they and their comrades of the *Café Guerbois* had stayed up nights to find a way of capturing and putting on canvas.

These lines or daubs of nearly pure color, separated by white, were a confirmation of the optical discoveries of Helmholtz and Chevreul. Probably Claude Monet and Pissarro had been interested in these discoveries of decomposition of color and science of complementaries, and had studied the optical problems that they suggested, with the rest of the world. Science had told them that a ray of sunlight passing through a prism was broken or decomposed into three pure colors, yellow, red and blue, and at their edges these colors by mingling created violet, green, orange and indigo, a

sort of blue violet. These form the seven colors of the rainbow or prism. All other colors that are called by different names are combinations of these seven. White is not a color; it is the light made up of all the colors of the prism. Nor does black exist; it is the absence of light.

Up to this time their habit had been to mix their colors on their palette. They took for example a daub of yellow and a daub of blue, and by mixing it had a shade of green to put on the canvas. Turner took the same two colors, yellow and blue, and placed them side by side on the canvas and the green was made in the retina of the spectator's eye if he stood off and focused the painting as a whole. This was on the principle that color in a decomposed form would recombine into pure light again when placed on the canvas in proper juxtaposition. The optical mingling excited more



SKETCH OF BERTHE MORISOT  
AND HER DAUGHTER (PASTEL)  
By Pierre Auguste Renoir

—Courtesy Musée des Beaux-Arts  
de la Ville de Paris; Petit Palais





LA DANSE À LA CAMPAGNE  
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir

(THE DANCE IN THE COUNTRY)

intense luminosity and the result was far more brilliant than that of any old masterpiece. This is what they mean when they speak of the broken color or of the decomposition of tone of the Impressionists.

Each of the primary colors has a special affinity for the color that the other two make if mixed. For example, red is particularly fond of, in other words, is a complement of green, which is made up of the other two primary colors, blue and yellow. Blue is complement of orange (red and yellow) and yellow is a complement of violet (blue and red) and vice versa.

This division of the tone, to get the greatest light, constituted the greatest innovation of the Impressionists. For of course Claude Monet and Pissarro were not long in spreading the propaganda of their discovery, upon their return to Paris after the war. Claude Monet particularly preached the doctrine, the "New Gospel of Broken Colors." Renoir was one of the first to see the advantage that one could draw from the decomposition of light. Sisley was another disciple. Manet never wrought his art by color spots. Just how

greatly he was influenced by Claude Monet is difficult to say, for it is never easy to know who has given and who has received. It was about this time, however, that his flowing brush-work became freer and more broken. His later works, though vibrant with light, have not the limpid harmony that is to be found in the works of the last survivors of the group.

Meantime they were working direct from nature and applying the broken color theories to their work, making discoveries each day that opened their eyes to something new. They started by not mixing colors in mass. At the beginning they did not dare to free themselves from all ancient methods, but they grew more and more free, their colors more and more simple. They did not mix them but tried all other changes. They put them side by side; they superposed them, to make them play through the holes that those on top left. They often kept the charm and freshness of the sketch, at the expense of solidity.

The three primary colors, yellow, red and blue, with the secondary colors violet, green and orange, with white



LA DANSE À LA VILLE  
By Pierre-Auguste Renoir

(THE DANCE IN THE CITY)



*LE BON BOCK*  
By Edouard Manet.

(THE GOOD GLASS OF BEER)

placed between each to keep the colors apart, composed their palette. They discarded all blacks and browns. They had no exact rules; those they left for their followers. Turner displayed consummate skill in blending his darks with the ground. The Impressionists avoided the difficulty by having no darks at all, and for this very reason their works lack the variety and force of Turner's glowing canvases. The omission of black from their palette is perhaps responsible for the lack of grave and serious feeling, for black suggests these, which characterizes their work as a whole, any may explain in part why most Impressionist landscapes look their best in a photographic reproduction. But the Impressionists were not trying to express grave

and serious things and they wisely kept to what they could express. What they wished to express with their broken color was the reverberation of color, the glint of leafage, the glitter of rocks, and one finds a canvas now and then which when given a rapid glance radiates, throws its light on the face of the spectator, but unless one averts one's attention promptly the illusion passes and the picture falls apart into a mass of exceedingly bright and daring spots.

There is also a certain unity due not only to the talent of the artists, but to the fact that all the individual tones are built up of interlaced patches of the primary colors. Repetition of these colors is necessarily carried through the whole picture. For ex-



THE FUNERAL  
By Édouard Manet

—Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art



IMPRESSION. SOLEIL LEVANT  
By Claude Monet.

(IMPRESSION. THE RISING SUN)  
—Exhibited at Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines, Paris, in 1874

ample, if a fire illumines the scene the colors carried through the whole picture should be orange and red; if the light comes from the sky, blue would mingle with everything. The seven hues of the prism do not act separately in nature; they blend. A nearby tree is green; seen further away through the luminous atoms of the air, reflecting the blue sky above, it appears bluish. Take for example a table spread with its white cloth. Science teaches us that white does not exist by itself, but is a fusion of the entire spectrum. The Impressionists painted the white tablecloth with all the colors of the rainbow, leaving it to our eyes to re-compose them again into white.

This is the secret of Broken-Color, the explanation of which most people skip when they run across it. These theories of technique of Impressionism, others had had pre-

sentiments of. They show in certain frescoes of Andrea del Sarto, in Memling, in the Byzantine mosaics in their earliest stages. Among the moderns, they are found almost complete in Watteau. In the *Embarkation for Cythera*, Watteau perfectly grasped the division of color tones as the Impressionists understood it. Turner has often had this in mind in his pictures where the shadows are colored.

In Constable's *Opening of Waterloo Bridge* there is almost this exact method of using pure white. Delacroix has an example of the theory in the nude woman kneeling in the foreground of the celebrated *Crusaders Entering Constantinople*. At a near view one sees that the parts of the back in shadow are modeled by a succession of strokes of blue, which, being the complementary color of yellow, with which



the lighter parts are painted, admirably expresses the warm color tones of the flesh in shadow.

It took our little group of men, once more united by the processes of expression, several years to work out what you have read in a few minutes, and they were hard years. When peace came, the *Café Guerbois* remained closed. This naturally stopped the frequent meetings and discussions. Those that took place after this were at Manet's new studio, 4 Rue de Saint-Petersbourg. Manet, essentially a Parisian, attached to the Boulevards, stayed in Paris to paint figures and subjects in his studio, not going out except on special occasions. Pissarro, Claude Monet and Sisley settled in the country definitely; Pissarro at Pontoise, Claude Monet at Argenteuil, Sisley at Voisins, and soon after Cézanne went to live at Auvers. Cézanne had a little money; the small fortune Manet had inherited from his father was gone; but he, only, of the small group had a considerable vogue. He

was decent enough to try and use this for the benefit of his comrades, displaying their works in his studio; practically none were sold. The men grew desperate and talked of ways and means to attract the public. The question was, should they continue to knock at the doors of the Salon as individuals and be refused, as Renoir had been in 1872 and 1873, or should they no longer submit their pictures but expose together outside of official circles.

Their common search by direct notation and transcription for the truths of nature, their close analysis of light and its color elements, created between them the bond of a distinctive school. They were beginning to be known a little to the art public and wished to reach a greater number by systematic exhibition of their pictures. If each one went his own way it would end in failure for most of them in all probability; if they could force themselves *en masse* upon the public it might count for more than any one of them could accomplish alone.



EFFET DE PRINTEMPS  
By Claude Monet

(EFFECT OF SPRING)



LES FALAISES D'ÉTRETAT. 1882  
By Claude Monet

(THE CLIFFS AT ÉTRETAT)

They felt if their pictures were seen often enough to accustom the public to their strangeness, sooner or later the truths they expressed would be recognized, but just how to accomplish this without influence or money! Those who had never been admitted to the Salon had less to lose than the few who had been admitted. Manet had succeeded in getting back after the *Salon des Refusés* by his exceptional fighting ability. Berthe Morisot was the only one of them to expose during the war. Claude Monet and Sisley had met with no special opposition. Pissarro had exposed for years as he was more or less a follower of Courbet and Corot until he developed his light manner. Renoir exposed his *Lise* in 1868 and although it was painted out-of-doors, he was still dependent upon Courbet as to technique. Even when they were accepted at

the Salon they were not sure of being fairly seen, for it often happened that the pictures were accepted in a way that was worse than being refused. Fantin-Latour had been hung in the third row. Many a good picture was hung so high that only an instinct could make one discover it. They were sure if they followed their method and developed as a group, they would be refused at the Salons, with a possible exception now and then, so they renounced the Salons and decided to expose together. It is said that to this decision, that recognized the value of an organized body of workers animated by similar aims, is due the immense influence that the band of Impressionists had on the moulding of modern artistic thought.

Manet did not feel like giving up what he had gained, so did not join them in their

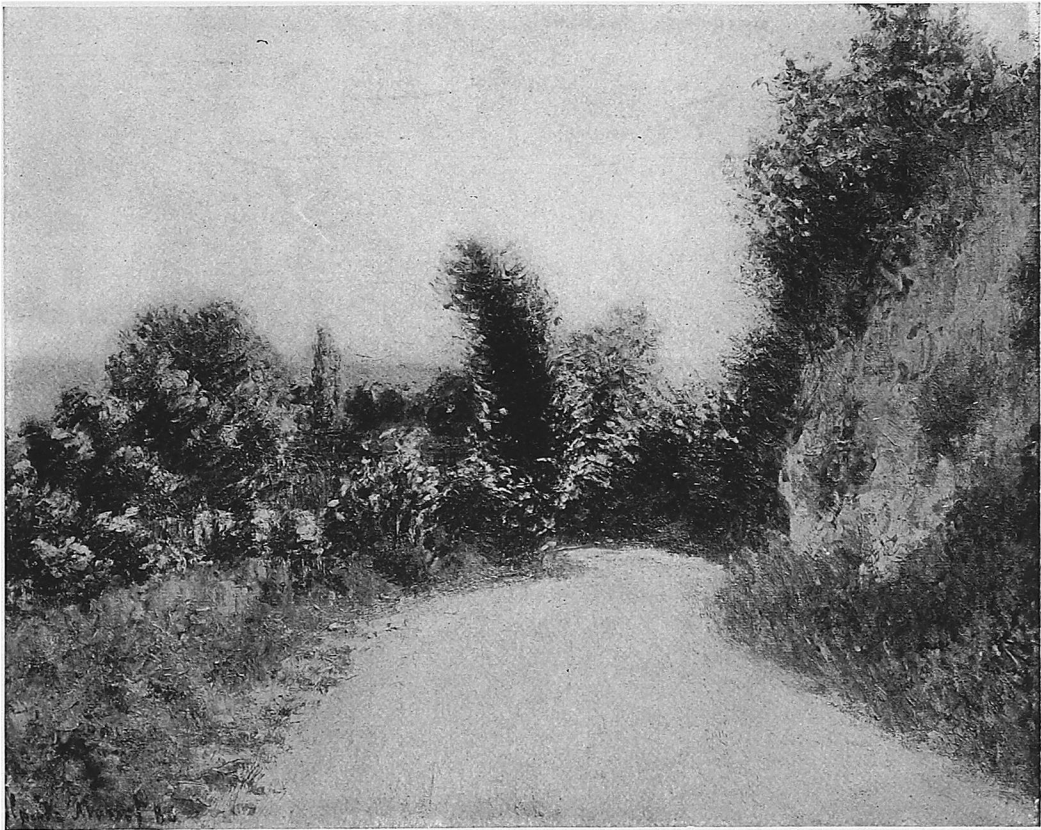
revolt, but gave his influence and encouragement to their cause. He had chosen the official ground on which to fight his own battles; their battles were to be fought elsewhere.

Up to this time the public was indifferent, except towards Manet. He had been signalled out by the Empress Eugénie, who demanded that his works should be removed from public display. His work was the laughing stock not only of the French public but the students of the day regarded it as having been done in the spirit of fun, and it was spoken of either jokingly or ridiculed as absurd.

Some of Manet's admirers say that he played a joke on the public when he painted *Le Bon Bock*, that he painted it to show his enemies that he, too, could tickle the public

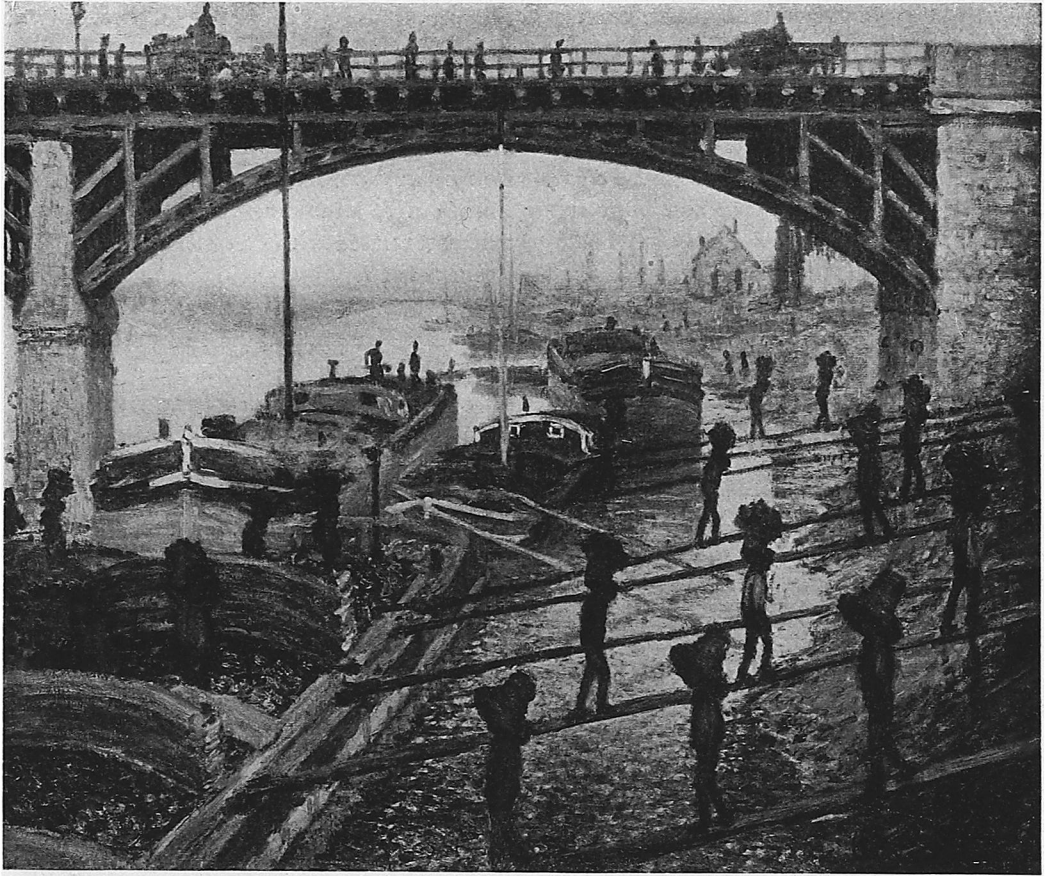
fancy and draw the praise of the critics. If that was his idea he succeeded, for *Le Bon Bock* was one of the most popular works at the Salon of 1873. In giving his own impression, he reflected the impression of any observant man. It is a bit of French life, although, by the way, beer is more associated with German life than with French, but it is not the drink labeled "Bon Bock," but the good nature of this broad, flat-faced Frenchman, the suggestion of the friendly greeting he would give were one to enter and sit down at a nearby table, that confirms our impression of reality.

Manet had painted other pictures that should have pleased the public if it wanted simple things. *The Music Lesson*, for example, was simply a picture of two people sitting side by side, one, a man, ostensibly



LA ROUTE DE GIVERNY  
By Claude Monet

(THE ROAD AT GIVERNY)



LES DÉCHARGEURS DE CHARBON  
By Claude Monet

(WHARFMEN UNLOADING COAL)

giving a singing lesson to a young lady. The green of the couch, the black dress of the woman, the light touch of a flower formed a warm harmony, but innocuous as this was, it failed to have the success of *Le Bon Bock*. Many years after, it was chosen for an exhibition of *Cent Chefs d'œuvre* held in Paris, and hung next to a portrait by Hals. At that time a comparison was made of the two pictures that interested me immensely. Here it is—I ought to know who wrote it, but have forgotten: "Manet himself would not demand a greater honor—his *Bon Bock* has been hung next to a portrait by Hals. Without seeing it, I know that the Hals is nobler, grander; I know, supposing the Hals to be a

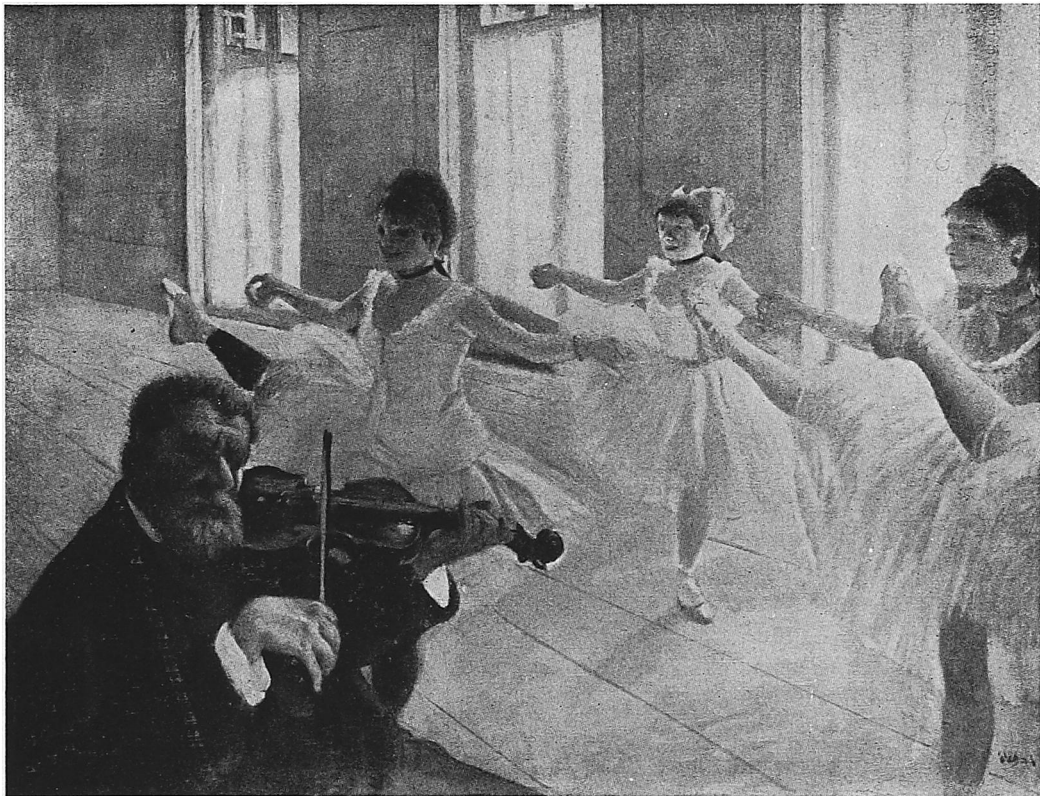
good one, that its flight is that of an eagle as compared with the flight of a hawk. This is exaggerated, as are all comparisons. Hals never placed anyone more clearly in his favorite hour of the day, looked forward to perhaps since the beginning of the afternoon. We read the age, the rank, the habits, the limitations, physical and mental, of the man who sits so stolidly, his fat hand clasping his glass of foaming beer. Now after fifteen years I can see that round, flat face, a little swollen with beer, the small eyes, the spare beard and mustache. His feet are not in the picture, but I know how much he pays for his boots and how they fit him. Nowhere in Hals will you find finer handling or a more direct, luminous or

simple expression of what the eye saw. It has all these qualities, and yet it falls short of Hals. It has not the breadth and scope of the great Dutchman. There is a sense of effort; in Hals one never feels it. It is more bound together; it does not flow with the mighty luminous ease of the *Chef-d'oeuvre* at Haarlem."

It was through *Le Bon Bock* that the friendship between Manet and Alfred Stevens was broken. I think Maclair tells the story: Stevens disparaged *Le Bon Bock* in intimating its source of inspiration to have been created in Holland. He said "He's drinking Haarlem-brewed Beer," a quip that took everywhere. Manet soon squared accounts, however. In one of Stevens' interiors there was a young woman about to pass through a curtained door to another room. At her feet some careless

servant had left a feather duster. Manet, glancing at the duster, said, "Evidently she has a rendezvous with the *valet de chambre*."

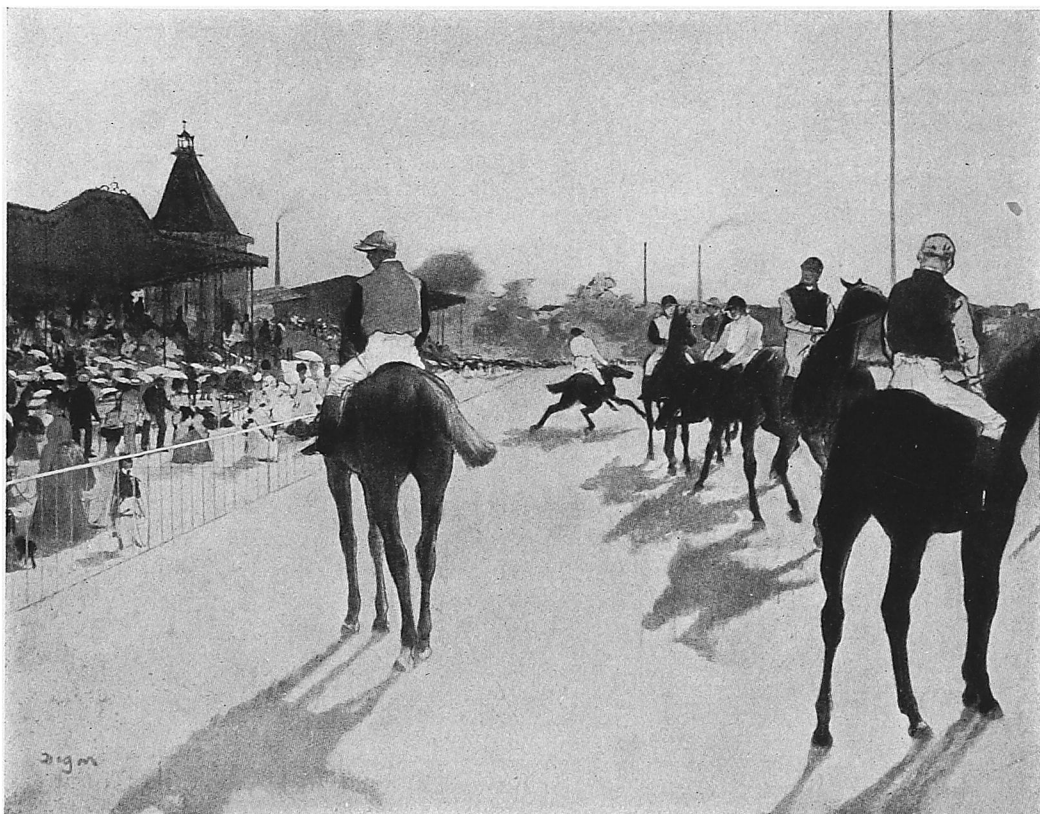
In direct contrast of spirit to *Le Bon Bock*, but painted in the same period, is *The Funeral*, now at the Metropolitan. The picture, although unfinished, conveys a vivid impression of sad leave-taking. It is a scene of austere and reticent beauty, chilling and uninviting; gleams of dull light alternate with dark sombre clouds. As a study of sky in its relation to the earth it is interesting; as a study of the unpreparedness of man to take his departure to another world it is expressive. A grenadier of the Imperial Guard mingles with the group of sombre mourners who follow the hearse to the last resting place of their dead. They look as lonely and sad as the



LA RÉPÉTITION DE DANSE  
By Edgar Degas

(REHEARSAL OF THE DANCE)  
—Collection Henri Rouart





*CHEVAUX DE COURSES*  
By Edgar Degas

(RACE HORSES)  
—Collection Camondo



*SUR LA PLAGE*  
By Edgar Degas

(ON THE BEACH)  
—Courtesy Dublin Municipal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dublin, Ireland

nearby frowning hills and the leafless trees which stand out as sentinels in this scene of inhospitable aspect. Irresistible is here the feeling of death and its conception. This feeling, which dominates the work, is accentuated by the domes of several churches and the *Panthéon* which show on the brow of the hill.

In *Le Bon Bock*, Manet had, as was his custom, used one of his friends as a model. This time it was the engraver Belot. In *Bal Masque*, or *Bal de l'Opéra* Manet used a number of his friends as models—Duret, Charbrier, the Composer, Albert Hecht, a collector, Guillaumin and Andre, both young painters. This was a peculiar picture painted in an almost uniform tone of black, a few women in fancy dress giving the only note of color.

It is said that Manet's first and last historical picture, *The Execution of Maximilian*, is one of the few pictures he painted not from life, and then he did the best he could. He had a squadron of soldiers to represent the firing party and two friends to pose for Generals Mejia and Miramon, using a photograph of Maximilian. *The Escape* is another scene that he did not witness. The scene represented is that of Rochefort and his companions effecting their escape from New Caledonia, whither they had been transported after the Commune.

After Manet painted *Le Bon Bock* in 1873 the public thought he had sown his wild oats and now was ready to come into the fold. How mistaken they were he showed them the next year when he exhibited *Le chemin de fer*. This was a picture painted out of doors of two small figures, doing nothing in particular, with a railway and the steam of an engine suggested in the background. It was not understood or liked. Then the next year he went one further and exhibited his *Argenteuil*. This time the figures were life size, his brother-in-law, Rudolph Leemhoff, being one. Another was a woman. They

were seated in full sunlight side by side in a boat with the water as a background, and the steep bank of the river as the line of the horizon. The brilliancy of the tones was more than the public could stand quietly and there was almost as much of a hubbub over this as over his *Déjeuner* and *Olympia*. He saw the water a marvelous deep blue in a fierce sunlight; he painted it as dazzling as he could and although it was not dazzling enough to suit him, it was more than enough for the public. The violet shadows took the place of the conventional brown; the brush work was loose and broken-up. The jury felt so hostile



LA FAMILLE MANTE (THE MANTE FAMILY)  
By Edgar Degas

—Collection Montgomery-Sears, Boston



FEMME DANS UN JARDIN  
By H. de Toulouse-Lautrec

(WOMAN IN A GARDEN)  
—Collection Henri Rouart

to him that his offerings of the next year, *L'Artiste* and *Le linge*, were rejected. There was nothing in *L'Artiste* to arouse this antagonism, but they felt it was time to call a halt. It was a portrait of the engraver *Desboutines*. Manet did not take this rebuff in a kindly spirit, but sent out invitations to those interested, and asked them to come and judge for themselves if he had been badly treated. The press thought he had, and said so. This made his next offering acceptable to the Salon, but after further consideration one of them was withdrawn as being too *risqué*. This was *Nana*, after Zola's novel. As Duret says, "When this *Nana* is compared with the numberless pictures of Joseph and Potiphar, Susannah and the Elders, Nymphs and Satyrs, from the hands of great masters, its perfect air of reserve is at once obvious." These were some of the pictures Manet had thrown on

the battle field and one can hardly blame him for wishing to keep the ground he had won, and refusing to join the others in their exhibitions and commence the battles all over again.

In 1874 we find our men of the *Café Guerbois* banded together ready to give an exhibition of their work. They invited a few artists, sculptors and engravers, all more or less known, who had some points in common with them, to join them, so as to attract the public and press. Boudin and Lépine are often spoken of as belonging to the Impressionist school, but they joined in but this one exhibition, withdrawing in fear from the name Impressionist, as it did not express their views and they wished to remain distinct from those with whom

they differed. There was no place in a central location large enough for the exhibition, so they rented from a photographer (Nadar) a suite at 35 Boulevard des Capucines. They charged a franc entrance, hoping to pay rent with what they received. They called themselves *Société anonyme, des artistes peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs*.

The first exhibitors were Astruc, Atendu, Beliard, Bracquemond, Brandon, Bureau, Cals, Cézanne, Gustave Colin, Degas, Guillaumin, La Touche, Levert, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, de Nittis, Pissarro, Renoir, Rouart, Robert, Sisley, Albert Lebourg, Auguste Boulard and a few others, thirty in all. No one knew what to call them. Duranty spoke of their work as "The New Painting," but that did not catch the fancy of the public. It was not until Louis Leroy on the *Charivari*, on the

25th of April, 1874, placed at the head of an article written on this exposition, *Exposition des Impressionists*, that a popular name was found. This was meant as an insulting reference to a sunrise that Claude Monet exhibited at this first exhibition called *Impression; soleil levant*, a really beautiful picture of a port with boats showing through the morning mists, their contours lost, all lighted by the red sun.

This name, given to them accidentally and derisively, was a misnomer. The men themselves did not care for the dignity of having a name thrust upon them that so little expressed their intentions. They said Impressionist fitted every painter and had ever since the 15th Century, and they wanted a name all to themselves. They

themselves tried "Independents," "The School of 1870." This last suggestion was silly because it was after 1870, near 1874, that their battles were fought. The matter was taken from their hands, however, for the public hung tenaciously to Impressionists, and after several years of struggle they acquiesced and were thenceforth known as Impressionists.

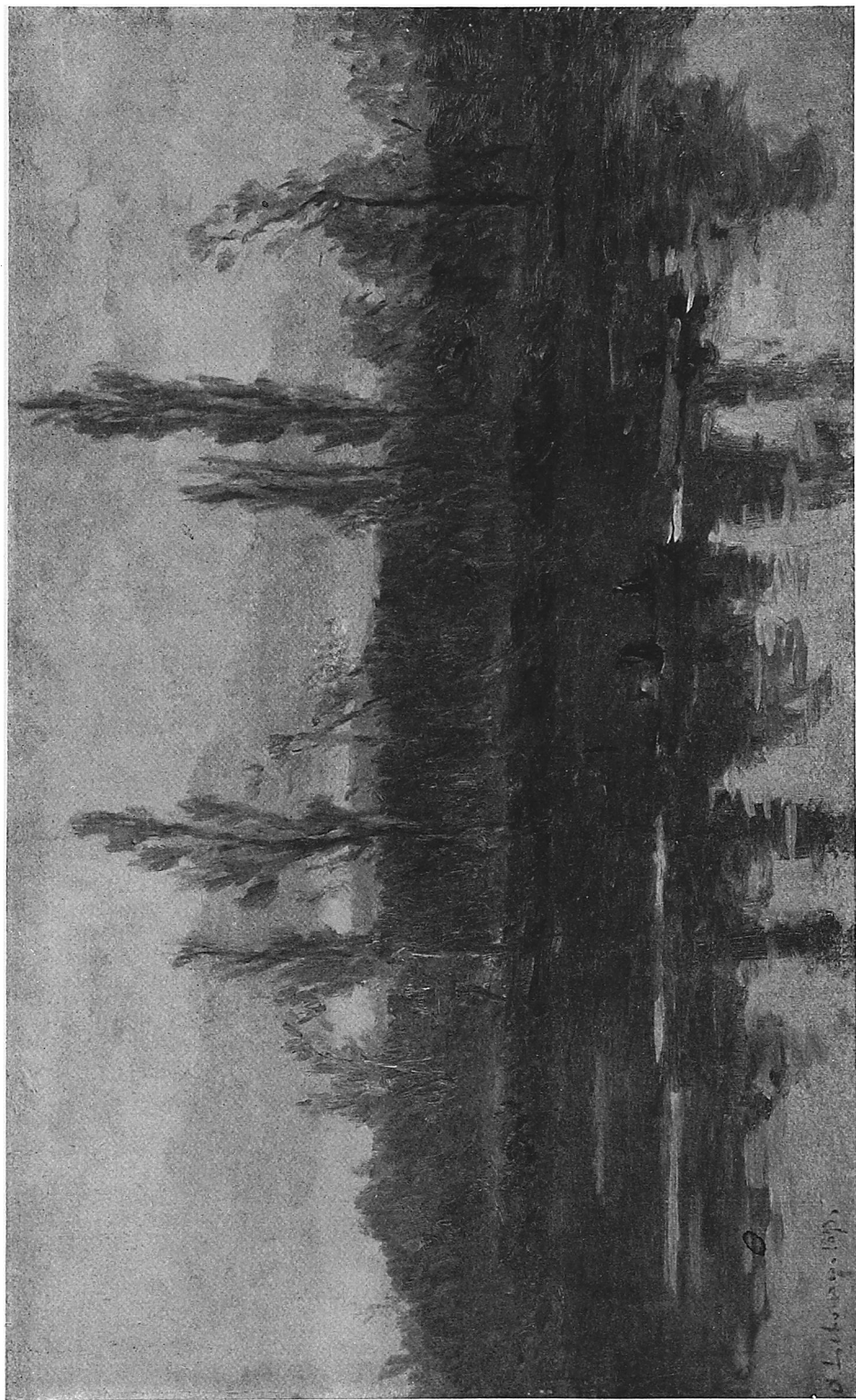
This historic exhibition in April of 1874, besides giving them a name, was an important date for French art of the 19th century, but as an exhibition it was a failure. There was only a small attendance, and that due to the better known artists who were frightened at the bad company they found themselves in, and took good care not to run the risk a second time.



LE PONT DE MELUN  
By Paul Cézanne

(THE BRIDGE AT MELUN)  
—Collection Vollard





PAYSAGE AVEC FLEUVE  
By Albert Lebourg

(LANDSCAPE WITH RIVER)  
—Collection of the late Tadamasa Hayashi, of Tokyo, Japan



There was not enough of a noise made to advertise them even, just petty insults, such as the placing of small coins upon the frames in derision, and jokes and jibes. They sold none; their friends had spent all they could afford and dealers were afraid to urge them upon their clients.

Renoir exhibited five paintings in oil and one in pastel. Two of these, *La danseuse* and *La loge*, are among his best pictures. It seems astonishing to our present day eyes that they should have been received with jeers and laughter, but it was the same old story, the public could not understand his originality. The general violet tones in his shadows brought down upon him his full share of abuse, and he emphasized a certain mistiness that he had already shown premonition of in his *Lise*. You can see

it quite markedly in the man's figure in *La Loge*, and in the *Danseuse*.

In this last picture the flesh of the young dancer, standing, life-size, is firm amidst the fluffiness of the ballet-robe and the softness of the brown hair. The bluish gauze melts into the background, suppressing all hard contours. The pink slippers give the only touch of color, although the picture seems full of color. This same *Danseuse* is now considered a masterpiece.

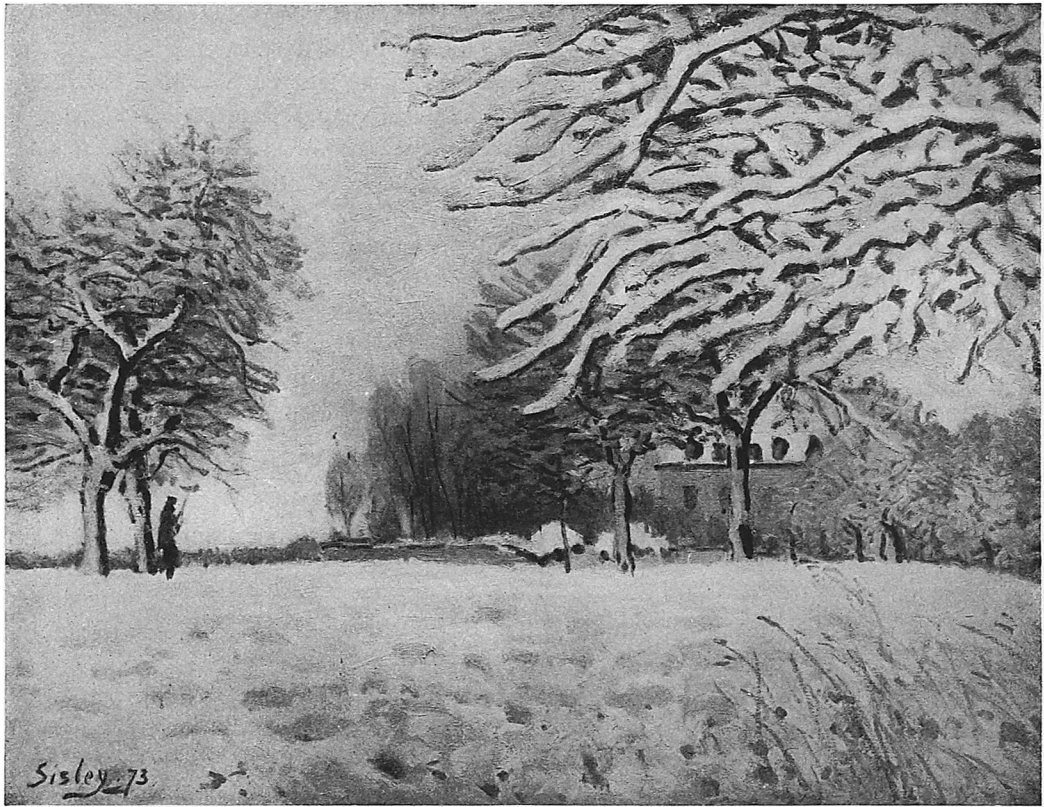
What Claude Monet, Sisley, Guillaumin and Pissarro were doing with landscape, Renoir did with figures. He adopted their pure color and bright tonality and under his brush the face, the flesh, even the accessories, took on exceptional radiance.

The next year, 1875, they had no exhibition, but held a sale at Hôtel Drouot to get



VILLAGE ON THE SHORE OF THE MARNE  
By Alfred Sisley

—Courtesy Carnegie Institute  
(Copyright by Carnegie Institute)



*TEMPS DE NEIGE* 1873  
By Alfred Sisley

(THE TIME OF SNOW)

money if possible. Claude Monet, Sisley, Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Cals, Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, de Nittis and Pissarro were represented. There were some seventy pictures. The pictures were disliked and for some unknown reason the artists were considered as hardened members of the community. They only received laughable prices. Even the attempt to carry out the auction-room trick of having friends bid up the prices was not carried out successfully and many of the pictures were bid in by the penniless friends in this way, and withdrawn. Including these mistakes and the real sales they realized not much more than \$2,000. In this sale of 1875, Renoir's *Avant le bain* brought \$28.00; *La Source*, \$22 (afterwards sold for \$14,000); *Une vue du Pont neuf* brought all of

\$60; Claude Monet's twenty pictures averaged from \$40 to \$60 each.

All this time the public and the press were not intensely interested in them as a group. They went to the first exhibition in 1874, attracted by those who joined them and because it was easy to drop into. The sale that followed in 1875 was good fun for the public but was not crowded. Their second exhibition in 1876 was held in the galleries of Durand-Ruel, the year after the sale. The number of exhibitors was reduced from the thirty of the first exhibition to nineteen. Caillebotte and Desboutin appeared with them for the first time; Cézanne and Guillaumin were missing. The second exhibition added to their notoriety but not to their wealth. A very, very few friends took up their battle and a little

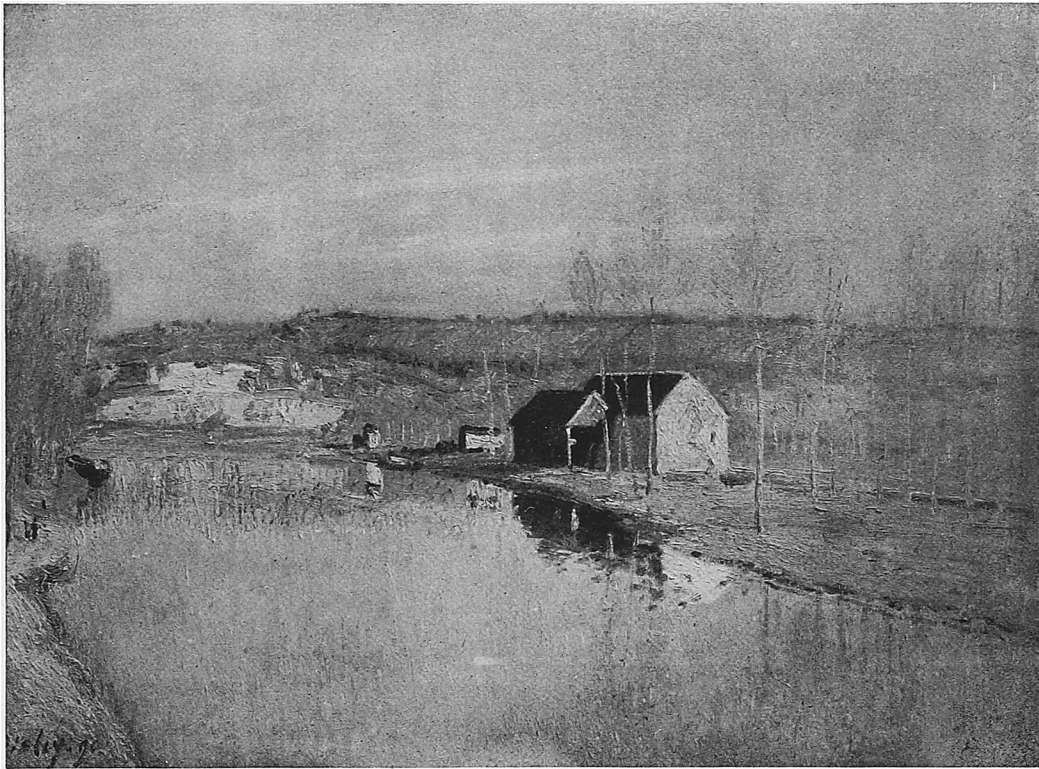
warmth was added to the press criticisms. One of the most satisfactory efforts from an advertising point of view was written by Albert Wolff in the *Figaro*. He said in part:

"The Rue Peletier is unfortunate. Following upon the burning of the Opera House, a new disaster has fallen upon the quarter. There has just been opened at Durand-Ruel's an exhibition of what is said to be painting. The innocent passer-by enters, and a cruel spectacle meets his terrified gaze. Here five or six lunatics, of whom one is a woman (Berthe Morisot) have chosen to exhibit their works. There are people who burst out into laughter in front of these objects. Personally I am saddened by them. These so-called artists style themselves Intransigeants, Impressionists. They take paint, brushes and can-

vases; they throw a few colors on to the canvas at random, and then they sign the lot. In the same way the inmates of a madhouse pick up the stones on the road and believe they have found diamonds."

A number of years after Wolff wrote this scathing criticism he met Manet, went to his studio and sat for his portrait at Manet's request. Duret tells his experience:

"Manet posed him leaning backwards, almost lying down, in a chair, then proceeded to follow his usual daring method of attack. He threw lumps of paint and splashes of color here and there over the canvas, intending to work each part over again, and so by successive additions bring it up to the degree of finish which he deemed desirable. After three or four sittings there were still parts that were only just indi-



LE LOING ET LES COTEAUX DE SAINT-NICAISE

By Alfred Sisley

(THE RIVER LOING AND THE HILLS OF SAINT NICAISE)

—Collection Mme. Sisley-Diets



LES SARCLEUSES  
By Camille Pissarro

(WOMEN PULLING WEEDS)

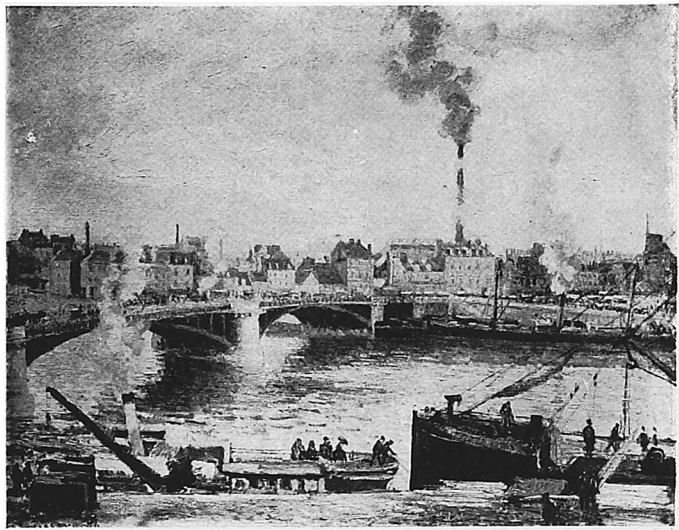
cated and Wolff was confirmed by this faltering and slow method in his opinion, that Manet was a very incomplete artist, with little real knowledge of his trade, and intimated as much to Manet. The sittings were discontinued and the picture never finished, but what there is of it reveals the hand of a master."

Among these pictures that Albert Wolff referred to were eighteen by Renoir, two that now hang in the Luxembourg, *La Balançoire* and *Le Bal à Montmartre*. To this exhibition he also sent a portrait of Madam Charpentier, the wife of a publisher who was one of the few friends of the Impressionists. This portrait-head of Madam Charpentier led to his painting a brilliantly successful and important canvas of Madam Charpentier and her two little daughters.

Léonce Bénédict says it is a *classic chef d'oeuvre* in portraiture. At the time it was painted friends considered Charpentier foolish to place so large a commission in the hands of Renoir. He paid all of \$60.00 for it. This portrait was, in truth, an influence in Renoir's life, for from this picture dates his many successes in portrait painting and his freedom from the poverty that had nearly crushed him out of existence. It represents Madam Charpentier dressed in black (Renoir did not discard black, altogether, as did some of the Impressionists) seated on a sofa with her two young daughters at her side, one of them with her hand on a large dog lying on the floor. The whole picture is brimming with light, the black dress of the mother with its white lace, the flounces of her skirt

showing from beneath, the blue of the children's dresses, the yellow and violet of the carpet, the black and white of the dog—all form a bold range of tones, but always in harmony. The fruits and flowers on the little table in the background give a hint of the beauty of his still-life.

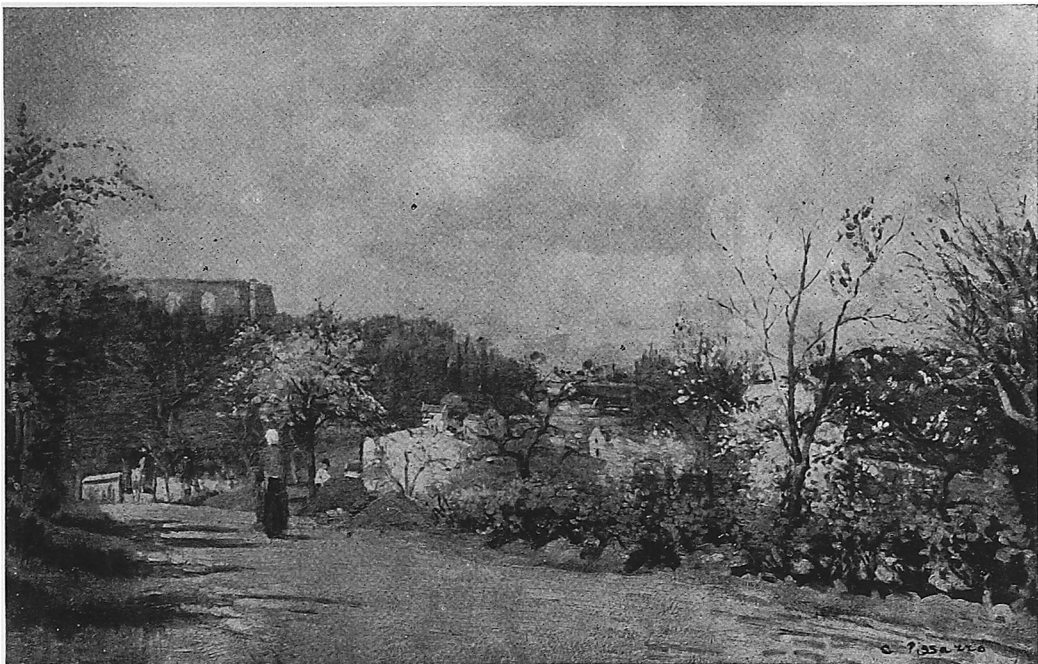
Here, as in so many of his paintings, Renoir has been content with an easy-flowing rhythm, with beautiful color, rather than an interpretation of the human mind. We must not look to him, or in fact, to the Impressionists, for the saving clause of a thought, a sentiment, or a passion. Madam Charpentier has rather the charm of a pensive flower. Renoir's greatest weakness was the insufficiency of psychology in the faces and a certain weakness of style, show-



THE GREAT BRIDGE AT ROUEN  
By Camille Pissarro

ing that the sense of color, although admirable, does not supply all wants.

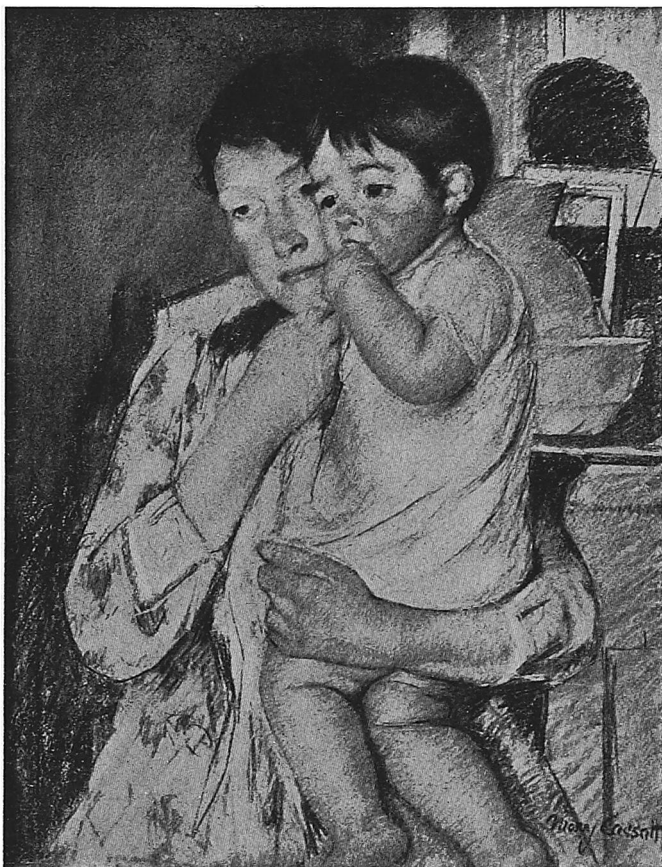
Time does a great deal to Renoir's work. The patina that certain of his pictures have taken is sometimes surprising. Some of



PRINTEMPS, VUE DE LOUVECIENNES  
By Camille Pissarro

(SPRING, SCENE AT LOUVECIENNES)





JEUNE FEMME TENANT UN ENFANT DANS SES BRAS  
(PASTEL)

By Mary Cassatt

—Collection Henri Rouart

them have been absolutely transformed during the past twenty years. The rapidity of the execution, the unequal thickness of the paint and the granulated surfaces of many Impressionist pictures cannot help but work towards their injury. It is said that it is impossible to varnish such paintings without changing them in all their harmony of tones; the grays and dull tints deepen under the varnish, and the general harmony is thus destroyed. If this is true and if it is also true, as many contend, that it is because of the varnish that many old masters are magnificently preserved, the Impressionists will continue to suffer, but this time at the hands of Time himself. In many of their pictures there is even now

an accumulation of dust and dirt in the crevices of the paint, and in this portrait of Madam Charpentier and her two daughters now at the Metropolitan, there is a noticeable cracking of the paint.

The next year (1876) the Impressionists pluckily tried another exhibition. There were but nineteen exhibitors this time—Claude Monet, Pissarro, Berthe Morisot, Sisley, Renoir and Caillebotte (who showed his *Raboteurs de parquet*) with some recruits. This exhibition aroused the public's attention. The indifference felt toward the first exhibition in 1874 was not long in turning to violent hostilities. No one gave the men the praise they really deserved for following their convictions to the bitter end, but heaped reproaches upon them and went laughingly or angrily to see the horrors of Pissarro's low, vulgar subjects, the opposite of all art: kitchen gardens, fields of

cabbage, women guarding cows, necessary evils but outside of the pale when talking of Art with a big A.

The next year, 1877, was the most important exhibition that the Impressionists ever held. It seemed to be the culminating point of the abuse by the public, which, by the way, they had done all they could to deserve. No other one of their exhibitions ever made the same sensation. Claude Monet, Sisley, Renoir and Guillaumin went full length in the peculiarities of Impressionism. This going to the extreme at this time was most natural. The criticisms of the public and press and the encouragement one had given the other during the past three years had developed and ac-

cented their individual peculiarities. The outsiders had all withdrawn, leaving only eighteen, these being true Impressionists, to show by themselves. There were Pissarro, Claude Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Berthe Morisot, Guillaumin, Caillebotte and a few others.

This third exhibition was another financial failure, and they followed it by another sale. They tried the same boosting trick that they played in the first sale in 1875, but with a little better success, as for the forty-five pictures by Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley and Caillebotte, they received about \$1,500. Sixteen of Renoir's pictures brought about \$400 and the purchasers ought to have waited a little longer, for the next year there was a slump in the market and Renoir sold *le Pont de Chatou* for

\$8, *Jeune fille dans un jardin* for \$6, and *la Femme au Chat* for \$16, a grand total of \$30 for the three pictures!

This time the crowd was there, but it came to laugh, to jeer. They took the pictures in their hands, turned them upside-down, sideways, pretending to admire them equally well in any position, as they could not distinguish the earth, sky or water one from the other.

After 1877 they held an exhibition nearly every year from 1879 to 1886, each year becoming better known and the public more familiar with the strangeness of their works. They were urged on at this date by both literature and the theatre. Zola's successes, *l'Assomoir* and *Nana*, were a very active influence in artistic circles. It was said that Degas drew his washerwomen



FEMME LISANT DANS LA CAMPAGNE  
By Armand Guillaumin

(WOMAN IN THE COUNTRY, READING)  
—Courtesy Dublin Municipal Gallery of Fine Arts, Dublin, Ireland



LES DEUX SOEURS  
By Berthe Morisot

(THE TWO SISTERS)

from l'Assomoir and Renoir his popular scenes of public houses and dances.

By this time their friends had bought as many pictures of them as they could afford and they were dependent upon the public, and the public was either furious with them or found them excruciatingly funny. Those who were entirely dependent upon their brushes suffered terribly. After the auction sales of 1875 and 1877 they passed through direst difficulties. Sisley accepted with his usual good humor five or six dollars for his pictures, and was glad to get them. It is said that Cézanne, who had a small allowance, and Pissarro, never went below eight dollars. Guillaumin was lucky, for later on he won a lottery ticket of \$20,000 and that ended his pecuniary embarrassment. It was fortunate for them all that Guillaumin knew a restaurant keeper who had artistic and literary aspirations, and who, at any rate, had a big heart. He let them eat until they owed for a certain number of meals and then he took a picture in payment.

Some of the stories told of the help they gave each other seem almost absurd when one thinks of the prices demanded for their pictures today. Certainly those who believed in them and backed their belief by good money (or meals) have reaped a reward not at all commensurate with the amount expended. If one wished to make a commercial affair of buying pictures the moral for the amateur whose purse is limited would be to buy modern pictures, just because they have not stood the test of time and there is yet no market for them. It is well known that nothing so increases the appreciation of an artist's works as his death. The story is told that Teniers caused the rumor of his own death to be circulated so that he might be benefited by it, rather than others. Some few collectors have given up old masters altogether and will no longer look at anything but modern work. Doucet, the famous couturier who recently sold his collection of eighteenth century works of art for about a million dollars, is today numbered among those who are buying only modern works of art.